THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

June/July 2015 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Don't Feed the Trolls

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In bygone days, a week or so after one of my letters was published in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, two or three letters of disagreement would appear. Sometimes a sympathetic letter would follow. Nowadays, within minutes of the publication of one of my letters, at least a dozen, and often more, critical responses appear online. Unlike those in print, these replies are universally negative, marked by sarcasm, anger, derision, and even disgust. Some make personal attacks. Others make allegations and arguments that are unsubstantiated, incorrect, sexist, or racist. Some have valid criticisms, but all are anonymous.

Aiden Duffy

Given how quickly these comments appear online (often before the sun is up), I wonder if the authors are stereotypical computer geeks dwelling in basements before a semi-circle of computers that are never turned off, but my children tell me, while they may be geeks, they are definitely trolls. Since that's online slang, I went to *Wickipedia* for a definition and learned that a troll "is a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion."

I am hardly alone in drawing the trolls' ire. Whenever the *Telegram*, runs an article, column, editorial, or letter opposing war, racism, global warming, easy access to guns, Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, sexism, or economic inequality, a red alert must go off in the troll bunkers initiating a *blitzkrieg* of opposition. The goal seems not so much to refute an issue as to overwhelm the original authors, to squash them like bugs. Sometimes derogatory arguments and epithets can carry over into future posts. An African American columnist named Clive, who has expressed sympathy with the Black Lives Matter movement, is called, "Jive." There's a kind of mean-spirited, Rush Limbaugh humor.

Early on, I replied online with my own name, but learned that a point-by-point response with citation of sources did not initiate civil dialogue. It only provoked the trolls to post angrier and more off-topic remarks. After a while, I stopped opening the comments altogether.

Unfortunately, although I have chosen to ignore trolls, many people have not. A particularly nasty blog led an online chorus pressuring the Worcester Police Department to charge the participants of a Martin Luther King Jr. day protest with a crime, a full week after officers at the scene told the press that no crime had been committed. Like those who stirred up the

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Solidarity Forever

by Shelley Douglass

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted with permission from the May, 2015 issue of The Magnificat, *the newsletter of the Birmingham, Alabama Catholic Worker.*

Every day during Morning Prayer I pray the Our Father, right after I pray for the people and causes close to my heart. On mornings, when we have Mass, we pray the Our Father again. At almost any church function when prayer is called for – we pray the Our Father (unless we're praying "Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts…"). It makes sense that we would use this prayer so much. It's the template for prayer, after all, set out by Jesus Himself for those who are trying to follow His Way. Of course we pray it a lot. And didn't St. Paul say to "**pray constantly**"?

A difficulty arises for me because I'm so familiar with the prayer that I don't think about what I'm saying. Sometimes I realize half way through that I'm planning the grocery list or the weeding, and then I stop and go back to the beginning — often to be distracted again half-way through. Meditating on the prayer (as opposed to reciting it) is somewhat better – I can take it phrase by phrase and pay attention, but even here I've read so many books and heard so many homilies about this prayer that it's hard to let it speak to my situation on any given day. Every once in a while, though, I have an insight – just a sudden new way of hearing a phrase, or seeing an application.

A couple of days ago I had that experience again – a new twist on a familiar phrase. "**Lead us not into temptation,**

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Vol. 31, No. 6 THE June/July 2015

CATHOLIC RADICAL

Published every two months by:
The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community
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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

Trolls

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residents of colonial Salem, Massachusetts to charge their neighbors with witchcraft, today's trolls aren't afraid to make public officials quake in fear of a mob.

When a troll disagreed with a 19-year-old college student's opinion on the unrest in Baltimore, he mined the woman's Facebook page and Twitter account to discredit and shame her by publicizing unrelated comments about her personal life and appearance. The troll's mean-spirited post left the student shaken and subject to stalking afterwards.

What can be done? No one wants to endanger the basic right of free speech, but we do have a consensus that yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater, when there is no fire, is an abuse of license not an exercise in liberty. Free speech is not a free-for-all. Some speech, libel and hate-speech for example, are considered criminal. As John Goodman says in the cult classic film *The Big Lebowski*, "This is not Nam. There are rules." But how does society even begin to hold someone accountable for what they say when their remarks are anonymous?

Of course, anonymity is sometimes a vital part of free speech. Whistle-blowers, activists living in dictatorships, anyone in genuine fear of a reprisal for their point of view, might only be able to express themselves anonymously. Investigative journalists and criminal investigators rely on informants whose identity they keep secret. Society would suffer if an option for anonymity was banned outright.

Having recognized that, I still believe that, in most situations here in the United States, public forums should encourage commentators to stand by their words by affixing their names to them. Newspapers used to require writers to do so. The use of one's name does not guarantee civility, but it does eliminate the ability of an author to carry out hit-and-run attacks.

Now here is where I have to put in a

few critical words for the political left. In my early years as a peace activist, friends of mine took me along on nocturnal escapades to paint editorial comments on military recruitment billboards. While part of me felt we were in the company of the protagonist in Ignazio Silone's **Bread and Wine,** who painted "Freedom" on walls in fascist Italy, another part of me felt like a coward who was expressing a viewpoint he was not willing to take responsibility for or defend in public. Although the playing field is hardly level (the military has millions to spend to lure people to enlist while peace activists have miniscule resources and reach), graffiti is not our only option.

To my mind, nonviolent human progress relies on the establishment of a consensus in values. Rather than settling questions, majority rule on controversial issues can stir unrest. Neither the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision or President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation produced an American consensus on slavery. The strongest social contracts are bound by free agreement often established after long and respectful exchanges. We will not persuade those with whom we disagree by calling them "nuts." We have to appeal to their minds and hearts. We need patience, creativity, and an ever-greater supply of information. Although it reaffirms our values and makes us laugh, we have to be wary of political satire like John Stewart's and Stephen Colbert's when those satirists ridicule more than inform. The work of building consensus can seem interminable, tempting us to seek shortcuts to a better world. We have to remember that when ruled without consensus, various would-be utopias of the past devolved into tyrannies.

And so, by standing up for our values publicly, under our own names, and embracing civility, we eschew trolling. And civility promotes civility. While on a peace mission to Bosnia, I lost my patience with a friend and snarled, "Your comments remind me of arguments I had with my brothers when I was 8 years old." "Yeah," he replied, "Arguments *you* started." In that case, our common immaturity was hard to miss. We both laughed and climbed out of the name-calling trap to reach common ground.

The Boston Globe reported on May 3, 2015 that civil discourse had declined so far in affluent Sudbury, Massachusetts that an opponent of three selectmen's votes for chairman showed their displeasure by leaving three toilets in Selectman Len Simon's front yard. A group of clergy stepped in to try and encourage constructive public dialogue. Selectman Robert Haarde said it well, "We need to start approaching different opinions with curiosity and resist the temptation to assign bad intentions to those with whom we disagree."

The counter-productivity of hurling mud balls at our opponents and then running away needs to be laid bare. Trolling is a cowardly dead end. If someone disagrees with me, I want them to say so to my face and defend their position intelligently without rancor. I hope to afford those with whom I disagree the same courtesy. Ω

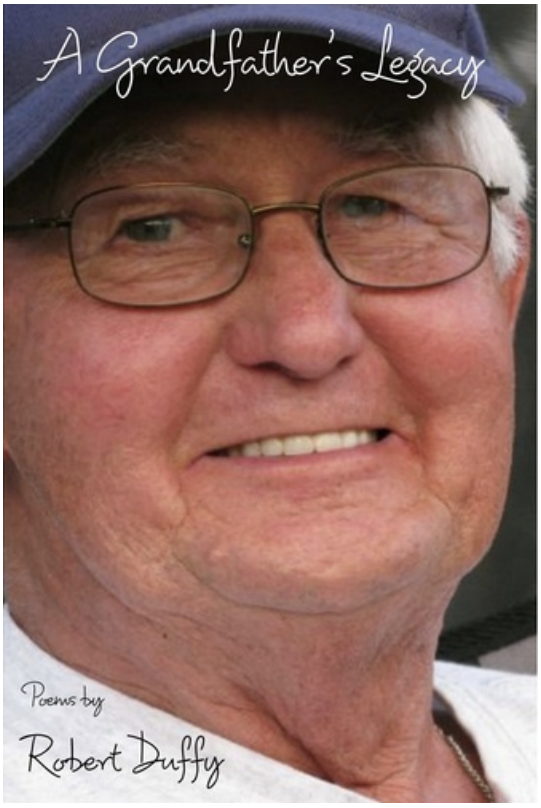
Robert Duffy
1931-2015

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

My uncle Bob went to the hospital in April and was told that he had less than a week to live. Typical of the way he spent his entire life, Bob devoted his last days to joking, praying, and reassuring others. He showed no self-pity. He posed for photos and led family members in a rendition of "You Are My Sunshine." A poet, photographer, crooner, mountain climber, biker, kayaker, and horror novel enthusiast, who was also a faithful Catholic, husband (for 60 years), father, grandfather, uncle, and friend, Bob was an amazing person. Before he died, he insisted that I add "fighter of evil" to the list of his passions.

I owe him a debt of gratitude for many things, but especially for taking me and my friends on numerous expeditions climbing New Hampshire's Mount Washington. Those adventures later inspired me to help my own children and their friends climb 26 peaks in a club they called "The Mountain Warriors." Like Bob, when we faced particularly harrowing challenges, I would ask the boys in my deepest voice, "Are you game?" and, before they could reply, I'd raise an eyebrow and say, "*I'm* game." When someone asked Bob why he climbed Mount Washington over and over, he said, "Because it's the highest, of course."

Bob was one of those special people whose death leaves those who knew him feeling like their world is diminished. It's hard to imagine a wedding without Bob singing "Sunrise, Sunset" or a family gathering without his mischievous smile. He was 84, but forever young. He taught me so much about how to live and has now shown me a powerful way to die. As Father Edwin Gomez said at his funeral, "We all look forward to meeting Bob again." Ω



April 1979
by Robert Duffy

I searched for God
amid the splendid
and in the half-light of poverty.
He eluded me.
I dissected and unraveled
the scrolls of Man's loftiest yearning,
but I discovered Him not.
Then one grey November day,
as I navigated a stretch of winter beach,
I found God singing
in the eyes of a child
who dreamed of summer. Ω

Eats
by Robert Duffy

I woke up today in my cold narrow bed,
I'd forgotten, you see, that I was dead,
with thoughts of a breakfast of eggs and oatmeal,
a strong cup of tea and a frying pan's yield,
and tickling my tongue with jammed pastry delights
but remembering my state, why this couldn't be right.
Perhaps was Earth's Tremor roused me out of my sleep
or some bird in yon tree with an extra loud "peep"
or Gabriel's horn commanding all now to rise
to take part in a party with a huge surprise.
But now I am sleepy and longing to doze
in Mama Earth's arms for a sweeter repose,
but, if in some future similar dreams should repeat,
I just pray they are loaded with good things to eat. Ω

Solidarity

(Continued from Page 1)

but deliver us from evil." How many times have I used that phrase? I always assume that the temptation is to do something, something wrong, and the evil is something done to me. I remember one interpretation that had it "Do not put us to the test." And linked it with persecution. Deliver us from being harmed, from being sinned against; do not let us do sinful actions. But… so much depends on context. Not the context in which the prayer was written, but the context in which it's being prayed. My context.

I'm straight. I'm white. I have a university education and a Master's degree. I'm a woman. I live in the Ensley neighborhood of Birmingham. I try to follow the Way, which is why I use the Lord's Prayer so much. I come from a position of relative privilege, and I'm trying to learn justice, and thus, peace.

Like most everyone else I've been following the coverage of police murders of Black men over the last couple of years. Murders like this are nothing new, but the attention some of them are getting is new, and the massive public outcry and indignation is new. Instead of keeping quiet, people are rising up and demanding an end to the brutality, and some justice for those long held down. Police murders could happen anywhere – they certainly could happen here. Baltimore – or Ferguson – or Birmingham – the pattern is the same. The underlying causes are the same.

I get most of my immediate news now from the computer – our local paper having been eaten up by a conglomerate. Computers spit out an odd mix of things, sometimes related, sometimes not. In the past few weeks I've been reading about the police killings and the response to them – and an article published in *Slate* in 2012, responding to a proposal by two philosophers to legalize infanticide, and a column published in the March 2015 *America* magazine, which mentioned a 2004 case in which a Dutch doctor euthanized a patient, a nun who was dying an agonizing death but who refused euthanasia. The doctor killed her anyway, believing that the nun's religion kept her from making a rational decision.

What struck me as I read these various articles – and tried to track down the facts in each one – was the similarity in attitude underlying them. Reading about the demonstrations in response to the killing (most recently) of Freddie Gray, I found a strain of opinion that called those in the streets "animals" and "thugs." Less than human, in other words. By implication, Mr. Gray was also an "animal" and a "thug". We hear similar language about Afghan citizens killed by drone strikes.

Michael Saletan, writing in *Slate*, identifies himself as a "pro-choice Republican." His argument is with two philosophers, Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, who propose (*The Journal of Medical Ethics*, Feb. 2012 issue) that babies already born should still be subject to "abortion" because they are no more persons after birth than they were before. (Saletan basically grants this point, but argues that because the mother's bodily autonomy is no longer at stake, the infant's fate should no longer be dependent upon her decision.) In researching the story about the Dutch nun, I did some reading into the death penalty argument, and found that – while no one argued that dying people were not fully human – many doctors seemed to believe, in practice, that the dying are not human enough to make decisions about their own deaths, even when mentally uncompromised. Thus studies done in the Netherlands, where euthanasia is legal, have found that many doctors kill people without their express consent, and that many of those who do so don't report these acts as they're required to.

So how do all these complex moral and medical arguments mesh with police killings, public hostility, and the Lord's Prayer?

The system we live in does not value people. The system we live in values profit. People who don't create profit are waste. Our capitalist system encourages growth and production, maximizing profit, cutting out the misfits, the different, the non-productive. We have created a system that is almost the polar opposite of the Gospel. By Gospel values, humans, being created in God's image, are inherently valued, sacred, to be respected. The "widows and orphans" – the least powerful – are especially valued. The sick are to be healed, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, and the prisoners set free. What a contrast!

These attitudes are not unique to capitalism, nor to the United States. It seems to be a human failing to deny the humanity of others. Although I'm overwhelmingly familiar with European (White) instances of that vice, it really isn't only a European vice. However, since the discovery of the Americas, and long before capitalism, White Europeans have denied the humanity of people of color in order to take their land, enslave them, and create a "new world" on the ashes of the one they destroyed.

I'm part of that system, and as a white, educated, middle class person I'm sitting on tiers and years of oppressed people. It's part of the air I breathe, and I struggle to be aware of it. I can't help it – it's just a reality. I can choose what to do about it, though, and that's where the Lord's Prayer comes in. In my situation, it's the "**Deliver us from evil**" part that stands out right now. Deliver us from the evil system of which we're part. Deliver us from the system of racism that we breathe in every day. Deliver us from thinking some people are more human, more worthy, than others. Deliver us from thinking that WE are more human, more worthy, than others.

Lead us not into the temptation of ignoring those pushed to the margins. Deliver us from the temptation to be comfortable. Deliver us from the temptation to demonize.

Deliver us from our own evil, and the evil we do to others.

Pope Francis talks a lot about solidarity as a virtue, solidarity with those on the margins, and with those pushed even beyond the margins. I think most of us are working at solidarity in at least some area of our lives. Can we broaden that commitment? Can we divest ourselves of our privilege in some way that will create change? Can we broaden the boundaries of "human", instead of tightening them? I know that I draw boundaries of my own: I

keep out those I see as oppressors; I keep out those who do the name-calling on line. I keep out the right-wing politicians and believers in patriarchy. I have lots of boundaries in my world. I wonder if I could manage to tame my anger enough to see the humanity of those on the other side of my lines. And even more challenging, I wonder if I could step across them and offer honest dialogue, whether or not it was accepted?

Elizabeth Johnson says that today we are creating the church of the future – with our lives. We are living the church of the future. I would broaden that to say that we are living the world of the future. We are creating the future as we live now. That's both a hopeful and a frightening insight. What kind of world/church am I creating with my life?

Forgive us our trespasses – lead us not into temptation – deliver us from our evil.

Please God. *Deo Voluntas*. Amen. Ω

The Pedestrian

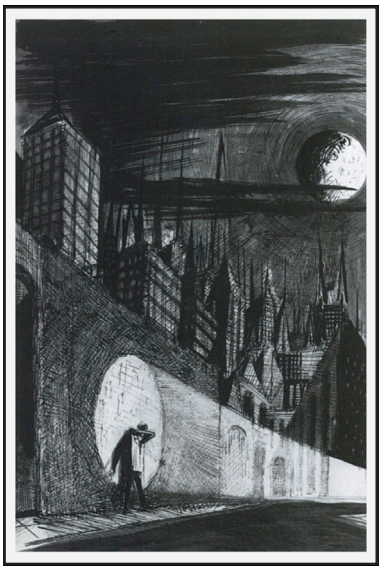
by Ray Bradbury

Editor's Note: On May 5, the Federal Aviation Administration approved the testing of drones that fly outside the sight of their operators, a first step to their widespread domestic use. In light of this decision, the increased video surveillance by police in public schools and elsewhere, as well as the arrest and murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, we offer the following short story from 1951.

To enter out into that silence that was the city at eight o'clock of a misty evening in November, to put your feet upon that buckling concrete walk, to step over grassy seams and make your way, hands in pockets, through the silences, that was what Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do. He would stand upon the corner of an intersection and peer down long moonlit avenues of sidewalk in four directions, deciding which way to go, but it really made no difference; he was alone in this world of 2053 A.D., or as good as alone, and with a final decision made, a path selected, he would stride off, sending patterns of frosty air before him like the smoke of a cigar.

Sometimes he would walk for hours and miles and return only at midnight to his house. And on his way he would see the cottages and homes with their dark windows, and it was not unequal to walking through a graveyard where only the faintest glimmers of firefly light appeared in flickers behind the windows. Sudden gray phantoms seemed to manifest upon inner room walls where a curtain was still undrawn against the night, or there were whisperings and murmurs where a window in a tomb-like building was still open.

Mr. Leonard Mead would pause, cock his head, listen, look, and march on, his feet making no noise on the lumpy walk. For long ago he had wisely changed to sneakers when strolling at night, because the dogs in intermittent squads would parallel his journey with barkings if he wore hard heels, and lights might click on and faces appear and an entire street be startled by the passing of a lone figure,



himself, in the early November evening.

On this particular evening he began his journey in a westerly direction, toward the hidden sea. There was a good crystal frost in the air; it cut the nose and made the lungs blaze like a Christmas tree inside; you could feel the cold light going on and off, all the branches filled with invisible snow. He listened to the faint push of his soft shoes through autumn leaves with satisfaction, and whistled a cold quiet whistle between his teeth, occasionally picking up a leaf as he passed, examining its skeletal pattern in the infrequent lamplights as he went on, smelling its rusty smell.

"Hello, in there," he whispered to every house on every side as he moved. "What's up tonight on Channel 4, Channel 7, Channel 9? Where are the cowboys rushing, and do I see the United States Cavalry over the next hill to the rescue?"

The street was silent and long and empty, with only his shadow moving like the shadow of a hawk in mid-country. If he closed his eyes and stood very still, frozen, he could imagine himself upon the center of a plain, a wintry, windless Arizona desert with no house in a thousand miles, and only dry river beds, the street, for company.

"What is it now?' he asked the houses, noticing his wrist watch. "Eight-thirty P.M.? Time for a dozen assorted murders? A quiz? A revue? A comedian falling off the stage?"

Was that a murmur of laughter from

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The Pedestrian

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within a moon-white house? He hesitated, but went on when nothing more happened. He stumbled over a particularly uneven section of sidewalk. The cement was vanishing under flowers and grass. In ten years of walking by night or day, for thousands of miles, he had never met another person walking, not one in all that time.

He came to a cloverleaf intersection which stood silent where two main highways crossed the town. During the day it was a thunderous surge of cars, the gas stations open, a great insect rustling and a ceaseless jockeying for position as the scarab-beetles, a faint incense puttering from their exhausts, skimmed homeward to the far directions. But now these highways, too, were like streams in a dry season, all stone and bed and moon radiance.

He turned back on a side street, circling around toward his home. He was within a block of his destination when the lone car turned a corner quite suddenly and flashed a fierce white cone of light upon him. He stood entranced, not unlike a night moth, stunned by the illumination, and then drawn toward it.

A metallic voice called to him:

"Stand still. Stay where you are! Don't move!"

He halted.

"Put up your hands!"

"But-" he said.

"Your hands up! Or we'll shoot!"

The police, of course, but what a rare, incredible thing; in a city of three million, there was only one police car left, wasn't that correct? Ever since a year ago, 2052, the election year, the force had been cut down from three cars to one. Crime was ebbing; there was no need now for the police, save for this one lone car wandering and wandering the empty streets.

"Your name?" said the police car in a metallic whisper. He couldn't see the men in it for the bright light in his eyes.

"Leonard Mead," he said.

"Speak up!"

"Leonard Mead!"

"Business or profession?"

"I guess you'd call me a writer."

"No profession," said the police car, as if talking to itself. The light held him fixed, like a museum specimen, needle thrust through chest.

"You might say that," said Mr. Mead.

He hadn't written in years. Magazines and books didn't sell anymore. Everything went on in the tomb-like houses at night now, he thought, continuing his fancy. The tombs, ill-lit by television light, where the people sat like the dead, the gray or multi-colored lights touching their faces, but never really touching them.

"No profession," said the phonograph voice, hissing. "What are you doing out?"

"Walking," said Leonard Mead.

"Walking!"

"Just walking," he said simply, but his face felt cold.

"Walking, just walking, walking?"

"Yes, sir."

"Walking where? For what?"

"Walking for air. Walking to see."

"Your address!"

"Eleven South Saint James Street."

"And there is air in your house, you have an air conditioner, Mr. Mead?"

"Yes."

"And you have a viewing screen in your house to see with?"

"No."

"No?" There was a crackling quiet that in itself was an accusation.

"Are you married, Mr. Mead?"

"No."

"Not married," said the police voice behind the fiery beam. The moon was high and dear among the stars and the houses were gray and silent.

"Nobody wanted me," said Leonard Mead with a smile.

"Don't speak unless you're spoken to!"

Leonard Mead waited in the cold night.

"Just walking; Mr. Mead?"

"Yes."

"But you haven't explained for what purpose."

"I explained; for air, and to see, and just to walk."

"Have you done this often?"

"Every night for years."

The police car sat in the center of the street with its radio throat faintly humming.

"Well, Mr. Mead," it said.

"Is that all?" he asked politely.

"Yes,'"said the voice. "Here." There was a sigh, a pop. The back door of the police car sprang wide. "Get in."

"Wait a minute, 1 haven't done anything!"

"Get in."

"I protest!"

"Mr. Mead."

He walked like a man suddenly drunk. As he passed the front window of the car he looked in. As he had expected, there was no one in the front seat, no one in the car at all.

"Get in."

He put his hand to the door and peered into the back seat, which was a little cell, a little black jail with bars. It smelled of riveted steel. It smelled of harsh antiseptic; it smelled too clean and hard and metallic. There was nothing soft there.

"Now if you had a wife to give you an alibi," said the iron voice. "But-"

"Where are you taking me?"

The car hesitated, or rather gave a faint whirring click, as if information, somewhere, was dropping card by punch-slotted card under electric eyes. "To the Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies."

He got in. The door shut with a soft thud. The police car rolled through the night avenues, flashing its dim lights ahead.

They passed one house on one street a moment later, one house in an entire city of houses that were dark, but this one particular house had all of its electric lights brightly lit, every window a loud yellow illumination, square and warm in the cool darkness.

"That's my house," said Leonard Mead.

No one answered him.

The car moved down the empty riverbed streets and off away, leaving the empty streets with the empty sidewalks, and no sound and no motion all the rest of the chill November night. Ω

Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.

Henry David Thoreau

Letters

Dear Scott and Claire,
It's the evening of the day that the Marathon Bomber was sentenced to death by the jury in federal court. I am truly shocked, knowing how people in Massachusetts are preponderantly opposed to the death penalty. The judge had to go out of his way to find enough people willing to make such a decision. All the more reason to be very proud and admiring of the way the defense team and Sister Helen Prejean humanized the young defendant. It is wonderful that we have such dedicated people in our midst to remind us of our true values.

"Writing Matters" in the April/May issue of *The Catholic Radical* struck a chord. My youngest brother, about to turn 80, has just published a small book about his childhood and youth, growing up in Depression-era Dorchester. In his book, he describes how he came alive when he got a job at the State House News Service.... He discovered the magic of words, the thrill of putting sentences together to make a coherent narrative and finding an audience willing to pay attention.

I understand the thrill my brother experienced and how it has led to a life-long passion for journalism. That's why I am always happy to receive your wonderful publication and to read the responses you get.

Rev. John Doyle
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Scott, Claire, community, guests, friends, and visitors,
Thanks for the latest *Catholic Radical*.... The US detention centers for women and children [in the interview of Lisa Weinberg] *so* reminded me of Australia's cruel detention centers for asylum seekers. Those places were filled with sad stories made worse by the asylum seekers' treatment and dehumanizing by the government.

I was really touched by Kayla Mueller's words to her father about finding God in suffering. I had a priest here try to tell me about that. It took me a while to get, but Mueller's words about seeing God in the eyes of the suffering, I can "get" so much more quickly....

Bridget, I liked your words on humility bringing us into spaces for reality and love that affluence shelters us from. It is like Mueller's words. If we distance ourselves from suffering we actually miss out.

Bridget's words about the humble kitchen table [at Saints Francis & Thérèse house] also resonated with me. I love how, at the hospital where I work once a week, we have managed to make it a real feast day for the elderly. After we put together the little bits people from the community bring in— half packet of crackers, cucumbers from the garden, left-over sardines, etc. — BINGO— it's a feast. There are two younger mental health patients who come and help set out a beautiful cloth on our paint and glue splattered, beat up table, and set it out beautifully.... I think I feast as much on all the love around that table as on the actual food.....I've also been spending a lot of time with a beautiful Maori couple who've adopted me. He's failing in health rapidly, but I can't seem to find a way to assist in his care, that can keep him at home. He's currently in the hospital, but the hospital wants to put him in a nursing home. We're trying to look at all the options and find a way that will work. It's heartbreaking. I know I can no longer offer 24/7 care. But, even if I did, they won't let me do some of the care anyway, so I may not be able to make the difference needed to keep him home. It is sad to see such kings and queens of their people, who gave and gave, reach a point of such vulnerability. There's the eyes of God again—in the eyes of the vulnerable....

Sheri Ellery
Opononi, New Zealand

Dear Saints Francis & Thérèse CW,
"We Don't Jail Babies!" by Lisa Weinberg, the lawyer who visits immigration detention facilities for incomplete families, was a stimulating article.... Over the years, quite a few Latin Americans have stayed here, some for years, but the ones I felt most privileged to know were those who maintained a sense of exile, a refusal to forget and give in to abandonment. Of course, the Houston Catholic Worker is quite a transit point for many migrants (refugees?) moving northward....

Pax Christi,

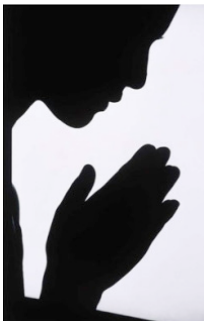
Michael Marek
Jonah House Catholic Worker
Dallas, Texas

Dear Scott and Claire,
I have enjoyed *The Catholic Radical* for many years, and in the April/May issue I especially appreciated Bridget's reflections and your editors' beautifully thoughtful response to the letter from Saint Louis.

The interview with Lisa Weinberg was moving, and shocking. Thank you for publishing it for us to read....

Jack Yates
Fall River, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar



Wednesday, June 3 — Meditation in a World of Activism: Given the many disturbing trends in our global society, the life of an activist can become laden with stress. This talk, by Will Raymond, offers to help activists "**close the door to their chamber and pray to their father in secret**" (Matthew 6:6) as a way to refresh body, mind, heart, and spirit before returning to the clamor of daily ministry. It is inspired by Thomas Merton's theme: "Contemplation in a World of Action." 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

June 10 & 24, July 8 — Mass or Evening Prayer: Come join us in prayer, song, and Taizé chanting at 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

Mason Street Musings

To redeem a house can be holy work. I came to realize this after observing the restoration of a friend's home in Connecticut. Over the course of multiple visits, I watched its neglected, careworn rooms recover their original beauty, thanks to his artistic wife. She toiled over the place out of reverence for what it was, a grand old house, well-made, and you could feel her devotion every time you entered.

We are doing our bit of redeeming here on Mason Street. As I write, I can hear the buzz and thud of the sanding machine upstairs. Our friend David Bogoian is recovering the original beauty of floors nicked and stained from decades of wear. Hundreds of shoes, tramping in snow and grit, have walked on those floors since we arrived. And hundreds prior, for several floors were laid down more than a century ago. We emptied all four bedrooms for the project. Ordinarily crammed with furniture and people, they now look spacious, their white pine planks sanded to a buttery yellow. The restored rooms will soon be peopled with guests again.

The Feast of St. Dymphna has just passed. A martyr, she is the patron saint of the mentally ill. It was not Dymphna, but her father, an Irish pagan king, who was insane. Deranged from grief over the death of his wife, he desired to marry Dymphna, his daughter. He followed her to Belgium, where she was living as a hermit and serving the poor, and chopped off her head. These tales of martyrs never end well. The miraculous detail is that Gheel, the Belgium town where Dymphna's remains are entombed, became famous for its unique, personal care of the mentally ill.

I read of Dymphna in a May bulletin on family worship last Sunday. The article noted that one in four Americans suffer from some form of mental illness.

Antonio Frasconi

"I am one of them," said our guest Bill at supper that night. Schizophrenia. Psychosis. Bipolar Disorder. Multiple Personality Disorder. All of us at the table began talking about the people we know who suffer from such conditions. R. told of a schizophrenic woman who managed the voices in her head by accepting them. She named her imaginary visitors and scheduled times to meet with them. If any surfaced inappropriately, she would say, "Not now. You and I are on for seven tonight." She went on to chair the Department of Psychology at UCLA. I am sure her "cure" is not for everyone, but accepting how God made us can do much to still the turmoil in our heads.

A northern mockingbird has taken up residence in the large linden tree in back of the house. Now there's a critter with a multiple personality disorder. Mockingbirds not only imitate other birds but frogs and snakes. They keep adding to their repertoire throughout their lives. I have determined our resident is an unmated male for his chucks, tweets, and chirrups persist late into the night. Initially irritated at the racket, I have come to take pity on the bird. His urgent midnight chattering reminds me of the loneliness of D., who walks our neighborhood streets raving at people only he can see.

A swarm of carpenter bees are feasting on a support beam that runs the length of our upstairs back porch. On Friday, a man from pest control will come to deal with the bees, and after that, we must deal with the porch which has suffered a lot of rot due to winter snows. The project will not be cheap. We are in need of funds to cover the cost of this renovation as well as our monthly bills. If you can help us out, we would be most grateful. Thanks to all who have helped us in the past. Because of you, this old house still stands.

Hours have passed since I began this column. It's now midnight and I am at the kitchen table. Rumblings of thunder have temporarily silenced our mockingbird. That same thunder roused Scott, who urges me to shut the windows so rain won't spoil our newly redeemed floors. I am off to the task. Happy summer, everyone! Ω

Claire

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